Gardner

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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE

EAST MEETING-HOUSE, *SALEM*,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 13:

OCCASIONED BY THE

DEATH

OF

Jonathan Gardner, Esq.

MASTER OF THE

MARINE SOCIETY IN SALEM;

WHO DIED MARCH 2, 1791, ÆT. 63.

By William Bentley, A. M.

PASTOR of the Second CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH in SALEM.

PRINTED AT *SALEM*, BY *THOMAS C. CUSHING*.

MDCCXCI.

At a Meeting of the MARINE SOCIETY *in* SALEM,
March 31, 1791.

VOTED,

THAT Captain JONATHAN MASON, ſenior, and General FISK, be a Committee to wait upon the Rev. Mr. BENTLEY, with the thanks of the SOCIETY for his SERMON on the death of JONATHAN GARDNER, ESQUIRE, and to requeſt a copy for the preſs.

JONATHAN MASON, Clerk.

A

SERMON.

JOB xvi. 21, 22.

O THAT ONE MIGHT PLEAD FOR A MAN WITH GOD, AS A MAN PLEADETH FOR HIS NEIGHBOR!

WHEN A FEW YEARS ARE COME, THEN I SHALL GO THE WAY WHENCE I SHALL NOT RETURN.

THE repeated events which have ſhewn death to us in various forms, require a ſolemn recollection of death from the pulpit. When we mourn the domeſtic bereavement, tho the grief be more pungent, yet ſentiment will ſupply our conſolations, and time renew our happy relations. When we loſe the uſeful citizen—the friend of his neighbors, and of mankind—we may not ſo readily find

find our public loſs compenſated; tho we may not indulge our tears, or our outward expreſſions of grief. Envy, or an ignorance of life, may repreſent, that the place of the beſt may ſoon be ſupplied,—that inſtead of the fathers are the children—and that as ſoon as one man is gone, another will riſe up and take his place: but devotion has taught, in every age, to regret the abſence of the eminent men, who have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in the public ſervice of mankind; and political virtue has celebrated the characters, who have conducted the important intereſts of the world. To whatever cauſes we owe human greatneſs, we are not better inſtructed in the magnitudes of bodies, and their relative powers, than we are in the hiſtory of mankind, that the greateſt intereſts have depended on the virtue, and generous exertions, of ſome diſtinguiſhed names among men. Whether the character of an age, falſe

attachments,

attachments, or any ignoble cauſe, have increaſed this influence, or not, it has been ſacredly real, and truly happy. And we cannot forget the late worthy CAPTAIN GARDNER. His character is the moſt intereſting to us, tho we were not honored by his preſence (with us) in our public worſhip. His reſidence in our neighborhood, his exemplary virtues, and his uſefulneſs in the town—particularly his ſtation, as a MASTER to one of the moſt intereſting inſtitutions for MARINERS—call upon ſuch an aſſembly as this, in which the greater number are employed in navigation, to ſee a refutation of all the charges which can be brought againſt the man of buſineſs and the ſea. His integrity was unimpeached; his averſion from profanity, ſerious; his private virtues, conſpicuous; his zeal for his brethren of the ſea, unabated, amidſt all the neglects which in this town have remarkably attended their common intereſts.

tereſts. Indeed, he was an example, in his whole character, worthy of the imitation of our mariners—not only in regard to civil and ſocial, but religious, inſtitutions. And to ſuffer ſuch a man to drop into the grave forgotten, would betray a criminal inattention to the means of virtue.

THE words read to us are the words of Job; and they accommodate themſelves very eaſily to the conſideration of that character, which our departed friend ſuſtained, as a benefactor and patron of an inſtitution deſigned for the relief of diſtreſſed mariners and their families.

TO THE ſuperficial obſerver, as well as the contemplative, of ancient times, the power and ſovereignty of nature were viſible. The preſent life did not correſpond to a deſign of immediate good to the individual, nor of an adequate benefit to the whole animal creation. The

laws

laws were not ſuch as a limited ſenſe of goodneſs might adopt. To exhibit this ſentiment, was the deſign of the book of Job. Its images diſcover it to be of eaſtern original: it has not the prejudices nor language of an Hebrew, and is not mentioned in their antient books: the preſumption is, that it was unknown in antiquity, and was written by an eaſtern pen. The book ſhews us approved integrity, and happy ſucceſs, accompanied with the moſt diſtreſſing diſappointments. The raging winds, the treacherous Arab, and cruel diſeaſe, ſeize together upon the man of virtue. His aſtoniſhed friends, too apt to combine ſucceſs and virtue, cannot reconcile this ſuffering to his innocence. They ſuſpect the virtue they once applauded, and charge guilt upon the ſufferer. Conſcious of integrity, he riſes in his defence. He carries them over nature, to ſhew them the ſovereignty of God. He wiſhes to expoſtulate with

Heaven,

Heaven, and, as in our text, to awaken the ſame ſympathy in God, which he could provoke in man. But he recollects himſelf:—The book of my years will ſoon be finiſhed; and the Sovereignty which afflicts me, will terminate my exiſtence.—But we pity the error of his friends. So ſtrongly had they aſſociated ſucceſs with innocence, that they inſulted innocence in its ſuffering. The pleaſing eſteem they had entertained was loſt, and the vigor of their affection abated. Often do we ſee the ſame effects ſtill more ungenerous, in an enlightened world.

But we ſhould remember, that a too ſtrong ſympathy with miſery may lead into an oppoſite extreme. Tho virtue may ſuffer, yet virtue may ſecure ſucceſs. And if we conſider the world as governed only by thoſe who are the leaſt deſerving, the contempt of ſucceſs may place us at variance with all the ſcenery of human affairs,

affairs, by deſpiſing the rewards which a wiſe conduct may beſtow. The part aſſigned to a benevolent mind, is, to foreſee the dangers of life, and to extend the means of relief; that no unhappy circumſtances of action, or unforeſeen events, may depreſs the virtue which remains, or deprive of the moſt ſalutary conſolations, the men who have nobly dared to diſcharge their duty. While we deſpiſe the inſolence of ſucceſsful villainy, let us encourage virtue in its richeſt gains: and while we juſtify the miſery of vice, let us remember the moſt humble condition of virtue.

Let us then, in the following diſcourſe, conſider the cauſes of human diſtreſs, independent of perſonal merit; the diſpoſition to relieve, in human nature; and the juſt improvement of the ſhortneſs of life, to aſſiſt the ſocial principle. The firſt will ſhew us the ſovereignty of God:

the ſecond, our happy relief; and the laſt, point out the happy uſe of riches, and a particular application.

UNDER the firſt conſideration, we may illuſtrate the means of ſucceſs, and the cauſes of diſappointment. What we cannot reverſe in the decrees of Heaven, we may ſhun by our knowledge of them. And the uſual ſources of our proſperity are in education, abilities, and ſecular intereſt. Whatever we aſſign to abilities, or impute to intereſt, we muſt allow that education produces the greateſt uſefulneſs and happineſs of character. By this, all uſeful habits are fixed, and the relations of life known. By it is not intended any particular opinions which we obtain in any ſociety, or the form in which we are inſtructed in the duties of life: the exerciſe of the bow is as real an education, as the learning of the ſchool; and the moſt humble ſociety is formed by it, as well as the

the beſt. Abilities may, like a ſoil, be rich, and yet without uſe. It is education cultivates them. It is upon this cultivation we depend for ſecular intereſt; and tho all forms of education may not be neceſſary, yet ſome exiſt of neceſſity. The difference of abilities, their capacity for various improvement and various ſucceſs, cannot be diſputed. We may grant all we pleaſe to education in employing the materials, and yet conſent that the materials are of different value. We may diverſify ſucceſs, and yet own but one way to it. And tho we ſee it attend ſome who are deſtitute of the higher means of education, yet we may pronounce it education ſtill. To be capable of acquiring may be a gift of nature; the means may be taught; and he may be moſt wiſe and happy, in whom theſe qualifications unite; tho a greater ſhare of either may in ſome meaſure compenſate for a relative deficiency.

Let us now inveſtigate the cauſes of ill ſucceſs. And they may be reduced to two—nature, and ſociety; but more familiarly divide themſelves into three—from nature, ſociety in itſelf; and the vices from perſonal character. Nature includes all obſtructions from the formation of our bodies, or unforeſeen contingencies; ſociety, all the evils ariſing from the nature of the ſociety in which we live; and the vices, all the miſery ariſing from the neglect to cultivate our natural abilities, or abuſe of them when exerciſed.

Some are ſo formed, that the animal functions cannot be diſcharged. They have not the uſual ſtrength of body, or energy of mind. They have not all the ſenſes perfect, or all the faculties of the ſoul. Others have ability and diſpoſition for active life, but by ſome animal injury are prevented in the moment of purſuit, or by the deſtructive elements loſe all the

the means of enjoying the fruits of their labors. Theſe evils, however, vary greatly in their conſequences. In the firſt and rude ſocieties, the enjoyment upon compariſon is eaſily recovered; and in ſome refined ſocieties, reputation will ſurvive loſſes, and urge the moſt generous protection. In regard to theſe events, we ſee the ſovereignty of God; and however we may ſurmount the evils they bring upon us, we experience our dependence, in the beſt projected plan of our ſucceſs. We cannot bring the will which appoints them, to our immediate ideas of right, or to our wiſhes and hopes. Conſidered then only as the ſubjects of Heaven, reſignation is our happineſs; which implies a full diſpoſition for the action required, in the natural circumſtances of life, through all their changes.

But as in all animal wants man requires aſſiſtance, he finds his refuge in ſociety;

ſociety; which he enlarges at his diſcretion, and forms by habit into a moſt uſeful rule of his life. In ſociety, he can obtain relief under all the evils he ſuffers, which admit of his exiſtence; and to furniſh this relief, and to increaſe his ſecurity, he enters into it. In whatever form the contract, or the ſtate, firſt exiſts, his expectation is nearly the ſame, tho various in degree. But ſociety does not always remedy the evils, againſt which it is provided; and this ſtate forms another claſs of obſtructions to the ſucceſs of life in individuals. All ſocieties do not regard, as the object of their laws, the general welfare: hence, the many are ſacrificed to the few. In all ſocieties, the paſſions of men diſplay themſelves, and oppoſed intereſts create endleſs ſufferings to the weaker. The employments, alſo, being aſſigned to different claſſes, and depending on the progreſs of commerce, and population, have their obſtructions.

The

The revolutions in political bodies, which are perpetual, expoſe the members of ſociety to involuntary ſufferings; and in theſe the ambition of rulers has a great influence. The vices, too, are more ſure evils. By indolence they prevent all our juſt exertions, and we become leſs inſtructed and qualified to enjoy ſocial life: or they ariſe from a too paſſionate purſuit of the good to be obtained in ſociety—ſuch as an inordinate purſuit of pleaſure—an eager deſire of gain, at the expence of equity and truth—and a fondneſs for diſtinctions, which involve us in deſtructive meaſures.——Under this fate of humanity, our only relief is ſtill in ſociety: our virtues muſt entitle our claims, and the ſocial affections be prepared to pronounce them juſt.

We paſs now to conſider the diſpoſition to relieve, upon which Job pronounces his claim.

So FAR as the evils of life are within human power, we can reſtrain the cauſes from their moſt painful operation. We can ſuccor the infirm, relieve the unfortunate: we can aſſiſt the induſtrious, and correct the vicious. But this aſſiſtance muſt have its eſtabliſhed rules, and not depend upon the reſolution of the hour. It is an evil inſeparable from ſociety, which it is to leſſen, and therefore ſhould have its inſtitutions as permanent as ſociety itſelf. And while experience decides, that the laws and government of a people have a more determined influence upon them, than either climate or ſoil—while, in oppoſite governments, we ſee the ſame race zealous for freedom, or abject in ſlavery—we cannot heſitate in juſtifying all the meaſures which give ſtrength to the ſocial principle in man. All expedients, then, which give men a particular intereſt in one another, are entitled to the encouragement of every friend

friend of mankind. The hand of charity may be extended to the ſufferer, in the hour of his diſtreſs: but this is not ſubſtantial relief. The good ſhould be permanent; and as the object is great, the hands ſhould be united. The helpleſs children are not relieved, merely by the bread they eat; or fit to live, by being preſerved in exiſtence till they can labor with their own hands for a mercenary employer. A generous relief is ſuch as a father would beſtow—the familiar means of education, for the valuable ends of the ſociety in which they live—a fair inquiry into their abilities, and uſeful ſuccor in their firſt attempts. And this aſſiſtance can be had only from happy combinations in ſociety.

But all men are not diſpoſed to this generous ſervice. The excuſes are many, from their own wants, or their immediate

dependents. It is the benevolent exertions of more ſocial tempers, which muſt force into action ſuch inſenſible minds, and involve every man's happineſs in the ſucceſs of his neighbor. The ſocial inſtitutions muſt exiſt, to obtain this aſſiſtance. When they exiſt, they have the following ſalutary conſequences. It is the buſineſs of ſome men to foreſee the evils of life, and provide remedies. The evils foreſeen provide caution, and the remedies render relief ſeaſonable. There are many added to ſociety, who might have been loſt forever. Families, alſo, are not abandoned to deſpair. Being under the kind inſpection of benefactors, they are encouraged to maintain their rank, educate their children, and continue their exertions. In ſuch ſucceſs, it becomes honorable, as well as uſeful, to relieve diſtreſs. It is impoſſible by argument to influence ſome men to make the

leaſt

leaſt voluntary ſacrifice of their intereſt. The work muſt be begun by ſentiment; and, upon the leaſt ſucceſs, it will be aſſiſted by pride; and this will become honor, and of ſteady influence.

When examples are before our eyes, of families redeemed from deſtruction, every man's danger will urge his care.—If he be not in danger, his children may need aſſiſtance; and if they eſcape, it is ſurely for his own ſecurity that no perſons be forſaken, and, under the depreſſion of adverſity, plunge into the low vices. Indeed, wealth, in large ſocieties, will have few poſſeſſors, who will not find it for their eaſe and intereſt to move in this ſocial vortex. In conſequence, ſentiment will prevail over a mercenary intereſt. Men, being accuſtomed to act, not as will merely promote their ſecular intereſt, but the good of ſociety upon the whole,

whole, will inſenſibly, tho ſurely, gain ſocial habits. To act from ſentiment, is to act from a tender conſcience; and ſentiment is the beſt ſecurity both of virtue and religion. A man, who accuſtoms himſelf to act in this manner, will acquire a mind ſuperior to all diſhonorable gains, to the rigor of juſtice, or a contempt of other men; and then ſociety will have a friend and benefactor in him.

The ſocial relations will alſo be objects of more ſober deſire, and more ſure protection. Men will not fear to engage in relations, which appear to be the honorable charge of all good men; and they will be aſhamed to neglect that attention, which ſtrangers would be bound to beſtow in their abſence.

A frequent intercourſe with the miſerable would have an happy influence upon ſociety. Men would bear upon their

their minds, not only the gains they procure, but the misery they occasion. And their apprehensions of the last, would check their inordinate pursuit of the first.

Such knowledge of human life would facilitate the progress of society. They, who from their wealth have the greatest influence on human affairs, would have the most extensive knowledge of the wants of men, and be disposed to relieve them. This happy communication improves the confidence of society, and brings every expedient for the public good into familiar view. Such social institutions would remove numerous prejudices which embitter life. Travelling into foreign countries has been often recommended, to wear off those partialities, which action in confined life, and very narrow circles, occasions: and the result commonly is, with discreet minds, a discovery of the deep

deep impreſſions made by early aſſociations, prevalent cuſtoms and opinions, and from the nature of the employment, and of the government. All men have not opportunities for obſervation, who go abroad; but as we ſee men abating their prejudices againſt men of any religion, by an acquaintance with them, ſo, by a careful inſpection of our own neighborhood, we diſcover all the ſufficient cauſes for the variety of opinion which exiſts. The averſion decreaſes, as men are more known; and the happineſs of life improves, in juſt proportion.

Another effect is upon religion. Superſtition has its cauſe from an ignorance of natural law; bigotry, from an ignorance of mankind. The power of religion is confeſſed, upon the ſame principles as the ſocial character—upon ſentiment. When they blend themſelves together,

gether, religion is the ſtrongeſt obligation to the duties of ſociety. Its rites have theſe duties as their object, and their reward; and its inſtructions are formed to make life happy. A conviction of theſe conſequences has made ſuperſtitious bigots ſo timorous of ſocial inſtitutions, ſo fond of retirement, and ſo ready to exclude any thing as their object but devotion. It is hence they have an averſion to moral diſcourſes, as lifeleſs; and a fondneſs for terror, as inſtruction.

We are now prepared for the laſt part of our diſcourſe—to conſider how the ſenſe of our common mortality may be improved to aſſiſt the ſocial principle.

We ſee, that generous ambition finds its object in ſociety—that wealth derives its value from the ſame ſource—and that vice, in all its pleaſures, is but an abuſe

of

of this favorite enjoyment. Religion brightens, only as it adds its motives to our happineſs, and promotes happy ſociety, by forming from it all its emblems of heaven. Let us now ſearch out another object for wealth. It is beyond our own neceſſary uſe—at leaſt we have not appropriated it for ourſelves——Where ſhall we find its objects? We think not of friends, or neighbors—of ſocial inſtitutions, or public benefit. Are we to live here forever, to contemplate it, to make favorite compariſons, and to ſee the world below us? In a few days, we muſt go hence, and return no more. We have not the hope left, of caſting an eye again upon the tranſient ſcene; and our property is alienated forever. No bleſſed friend announces our bounty; no heart is warm with gratitude; and death diſcharges us of the load, without our conſent. Not a particle of earth lays lighter

upon

upon us. Not a ſingle hair of our heads eſcapes diſſolution—and we are gone forever. Our pains in diſſolution are not leſs ſevere. The ſovereign hand of Heaven trembles not at our wealth, or our power. Our activity and diſcernment defend us not from the ſtroke—Death demands us; and we ſee our own fate in the meaneſt of mankind. It is death, tho under a canopy of ſtate; and the ſame death that overtakes the bewildered and unburied traveller in the deſert. In all political concerns, wealth is a dangerous poſſeſſion to a man, whoſe heart dwells upon it; for every revolution has it as its object. Commerce ſhares its bounty with the rich and poor; excepting that the laſt are nearer to the neceſſary wants of life, and not liable to the ſame changes. But for all its toils there is no compenſation. There is no true happineſs in dying rich, unleſs uſeful to ourſelves and other men.

And do we not ſee the beſt turned out every day? Is it not an admonition, that we muſt ſoon remove? Shall not our wealth ſecure the bleſſing of poſterity upon our own deſcendants; and, as we have aſſiſted others, urge men to aſſiſt our own in turn?

And can a better example be preſented, than in our deceaſed friend, who was the head of a charitable ſociety?—His virtues were not oſtentatious. He provoked no man's envy, but ſought every man's happineſs. He purſued no man's praiſe, but enſured every man's affection. The confidence of mankind he valued, ſo as to endeavor to deſerve it; and he has now left the world—and memory, and the virtues, are his mourners.

He has left the moſt uſeful inſtitution, of which he was Master, in a very unhappy

happy ſituation. And as it is a laudable object, eſpecially to the principal gentlemen of this aſſembly, it may not be improper to comply with a deſire to have it conſidered.

THE beſt charitable inſtitutions, in common with every other good thing, are liable to abuſe; and it has been a queſtion, whether ſome foundations have not increaſed the evils they were intended to remedy. But as this inſtitution comprehends only friends in the ſame profeſſion, and its dangers are ſo well defined, it eſcapes all the principal objections which have been advanced, and has the moſt full claim to the regard of all men employed in commerce.

THE favorable influence of ſocial inſtitutions has been already diſplayed. The MARINE SOCIETY has its full ſhare of this

this influence. It is confeſſed, that to commerce we owe our enlightened age: by it, the genius of modern nations is formed, and their laws and religion. The political virtue of our mariners is more ſecure, as they are maintained in the ſocial virtues, and love of their country; and their ſecurity adds to their political uſefulneſs. We are all ſenſible that they are particularly expoſed to danger, eſpecially on our coaſt, in this ſeaſon of the year. A ſhipwreck, a neceſſity of returning after an arrival on the coaſt, and the frequent deſtruction on the ocean, not only involve property, but lives; and the beſt proſpects are loſt in a ſingle voyage. Into what ſore diſtreſs are their families plunged! And is there no relief? What is the laſt wiſh of the dying mariner, when he quits the ſhattered plank? What anguiſh for his family at home! What are the emotions of his companion, who receives the tidings!

ings! Is there a heart on earth ſo truly ſocial as the mariner's? Is there a life more formed for ſociety?——Let us do ſomething for his family. Yes, ſays every generous friend. Do ſomething—is not ſomething done already? Can it be poſſible that our friend ſhould periſh in the common danger, with a ſocial heart, and an hatred of every unmanly vice, and no way be deviſed to ſecure one remaining comfort to his wretched family?—And ſhould he eſcape the ſtorm, and leave all his property to the ocean, are there no united friends to ſuccor ſo worthy a companion, and feed his hopes? Is he to wander in the ſtreets, and tell his tale to the thoughtleſs paſſenger? Is he to renounce his rank, and, forgetful of what he once was, deſcend to the meaneſt ſervices, when he loſt his intereſt without guilt? Is his amiable wife and lovely children to have no claims; or has the unhappy man, in his gains, never depoſited

fited for others, what he may claim for his own neceſſities? Is thus the generous mariner to abandon himſelf to the winds and the waves? Forbid it, Heaven, that the men, beſt fitted to live in ſociety, ſhould prepare the leaſt! That they ſhould have no band of union—no protection for ſuffering merit—no honor in the welfare of each other, who live and die for ſociety! That they ſhould be expoſed to oppreſſion, without uſeful combinations, who deſpiſe injuſtice moſt!—Or, that they, who purchaſe wealth with their lives, ſhould renounce their political importance! Will not the inſurance of their property, and the communication of uſeful obſervations, be more ſure, if they are repreſented by their friends, and forget not that it is their honor, their ſecurity, and their character, to be brethren?

AND yet with how much ſupineneſs has this ſubject been conſidered! An inſtitution, begun twenty-five years ago, with an hundred members, now reduced to a few, who have been obliged, by humble expedients, to preſerve the form of their inſtitution—printing and reprinting their articles, without effect.—And now their moſt active friend is gone forever! How can I give thee up!—Strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die. See the generous exertions of a town in this county, to facilitate its navigation by the ſame inſtitution, and with a ſmall portion of our wealth. See the many humane ſocieties of our capital; and let it be ſaid, while it is acknowledged the town of SALEM has the beſt mariners, moſt enterpriſing, and at home moſt reputable in ſociety, that they have vigor to keep an inſtitution to relieve the diſtreſs of a ſhipwrecked mariner, and give conſolation to his amiable family

family when he is no more.—For what is this life?—A ſtorm at ſea!—Let us help each other; for he that lives the longeſt, muſt ſink at laſt, and return no more!——